



# NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DECEMBER 19, 2008

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## **BREDESEN ANNOUNCES PLAN TO KEEP MORE FAMILIES SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER SEASON**

**NASHVILLE** — Governor Phil Bredesen today announced an initiative aimed at helping thousands of Tennessee children and families stay safe and warm during these cold winter months. Tennessee was recently awarded \$80 million from the federal Department of Health and Human Services for its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

"In these lean economic times, we have to look at how we can stretch every dollar in Tennessee," said Bredesen. "I'm pleased the state of Tennessee will be able to leverage these critical federal funds to help several thousand more families through the Department of Human Service's existing community partnerships."

The initiative will focus on serving more families with small children while continuing to assist other households. Tennesseans whose household income does not exceed 125 percent of federal poverty guidelines (\$26,500/year for a family of four) are potentially eligible for the program. Priority is given to the elderly, persons with disabilities and families with children under the age of five.

"Tennessee has done an excellent job helping our elderly and citizens with disabilities through the LIHEAP program," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "But we realize we can do much better at reaching families with small children. Unfortunately, in past years the funding has run out before our LIHEAP agencies have been able to help as many of these especially vulnerable families as we would like."

LIHEAP is a 100 percent federally funded grant from HHS to the states. To enhance the impact of the federal funds, DHS will offer a 2-to-1 match to the 19 community agencies that administer the LIHEAP program across all 95 Tennessee counties for non-federal dollars they obtain through local resources for LIHEAP-eligible clients. The non-federal dollars may be raised from existing or new utility company funding or from additional community donations. DHS has set aside \$5 million for the leveraging project.

The 19 community agencies that administer the program across all 95 counties in Tennessee will need to bring in the equivalent of \$2.5 million non-federal from existing or new utility company funding or from additional community donations for LIHEAP-eligible clients in order to receive the total leveraged funding available.

Program assistance does not go directly to the client. Instead, it is made in the form of a payment to the utility company or home energy provider. More than 60,000 Tennessee households are assisted each year through the LIHEAP program.

For more information about the LIHEAP leverage program, visit [www.TN.gov](http://www.TN.gov).

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